

Chaselea PRU

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134351
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328894
Inspection date	24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Hilton
Headteacher	Pauline Bury
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2006
School address	Avon Road Cannock WS11 1LH
Telephone number	01543 512300
Fax number	01543 512300

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the unit and investigated the following:

- assessment procedures and the systems for measuring pupils' progress and evaluating their achievements
- the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool
- the effectiveness with which the management committee carries out its responsibilities, especially with respect to admissions and exits
- the procedures for monitoring the work of pupils who are placed with alternative education providers.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, documentation and assessment information. Other aspects of the unit's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the unit's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The unit is located on two sites eight miles apart. There are 30 pupils in these two bases. The vast majority are in Years 7 to 9. Approximately half of these pupils have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. Of the remainder, a small number are at risk of being excluded and so they remain on the roll of their mainstream school and attend the unit part-time. An equal number have particular medical needs and attend one or other of the bases on a reduced timetable. The pupils who are not based on either of the two sites are all in Year 10 or 11. They are placed full-time with an alternative education provider, either the local college or the Forest of Mercia Project run by the Forest of Mercia.

The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number are children in public care. A few pupils have a statement of special educational needs for social, behavioural and emotional difficulties. There are far more boys than girls in the unit.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Chaselea is an effective, successful pupil referral unit. It provides a good quality of education. It enables pupils to achieve well in their academic work and to make outstanding progress in their personal development. Much of the unit's success comes from the excellent links that it has forged with partner schools, parents/carers, and colleagues from other agencies such as Connexions, social care and the youth offending service. The large majority of pupils enter the unit with a track record of high absenteeism and disruptive behaviour within their mainstream schools. In some instances, this has included violent and very aggressive behaviour. Under the calm but effective leadership of the headteacher, staff transform these negative behaviours and attitudes by having very high expectations, setting clear boundaries and maintaining a consistent approach to managing pupils. The pupils' responses in terms of their attitudes and behaviour are excellent and their attendance is good. Although not all pupils attend as often as they might, the overwhelming majority go to school far more regularly than they did previously and a few have an excellent attendance record. Very sensitive management also enables those pupils with particular medical needs to re-engage with education as their self-esteem rises and their confidence grows.

The pupils themselves are the best advertisement for the unit's success. They are extremely polite, courteous and respectful young people with a very optimistic view of their futures. They develop a much improved understanding of making informed choices and have an excellent appreciation of how to remain healthy and stay safe. They also become increasingly aware of how their actions affect others. There have not been any instances of bullying or any other form of intimidation over the past year, and no pupils have been excluded. Incidents that require staff intervention are very rare and low-level classroom disruption is negligible. The unit provides a very safe environment as a result of an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. All the necessary safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and the pupils confirm that they feel secure and happy. Parents, too, are of the unanimous view that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils' personal development and academic progress are monitored very closely. They know their challenging work and personal targets are reviewed and amended very regularly. Consequently, there is no room for complacency from either staff or pupils.

The unit provides a very orderly, calm environment in which pupils know their targets. Staff recognise these in their planning and provide a very solid foundation for pupils to concentrate on learning. They do this successfully. Consequently, they are very well prepared for leaving the unit. This means successful reintegration into a mainstream school for many pupils in Years 7 to 9, while for pupils in Year 11, it means leaving compulsory education. In 2008, the vast majority of leavers went into further education, employment or training. The unit's tracking of leavers from previous years shows that a very high number are able to successfully transfer and sustain the skills that they learned in the unit as they maintain their education or training places.

The severely disrupted nature of the pupils' education means that standards are well below those expected of pupils of this age when they enter and leave the unit. Nevertheless, pupils in the bases and those placed elsewhere make good progress during their time with Chaselea. They do well in achieving their targets. These are determined on the basis of the unit's own assessments of pupils' achievements at the time of admission and information that they receive from previous mainstream schools. However, in some cases, the lack of good quality assessment data and other important information from mainstream schools and its late arrival means that

pupils do not make as rapid a start as they could. All groups of pupils accelerate their rate of learning, including the few with a statement of special educational needs. They only remain in the unit for a short period while a more appropriate placement can be found and during this time, their learning needs are addressed successfully.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is of a high standard. Very careful planning, well-established classroom routines, high expectations and pupils' punctuality and attentiveness ensure that time is used efficiently. Staff use question and answer sessions very well to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills and as a means of assessing their learning. One pupil summed up the situation as: 'Teachers understand you and so you learn better.' Pupils are often urged to explain their thinking and encouraged to evaluate their own answers and those of others, but this is not yet consistent practice. ICT is also used well to motivate pupils and to maintain their interest. Relationships are outstanding and so it is rarely necessary for teachers to resort to asserting their authority. Such instances are rare because pupils enjoy their learning and so they readily engage with the tasks that they are set. This is because pupils find them interesting and relevant to their lives, whether it is considering when it is appropriate to use formal or informal language or how to change a water tap in a lifeskills topic.

Topics such as lifeskills are an important component of the good curriculum that the unit offers. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very well planned, with a strong focus on the promotion of literacy, numeracy, ICT skills and personal, social and health education. As a result, many pupils acquire accreditation for successfully completing unit awards. Other subjects, such as music and art, provide breadth but the range of subjects is not as extensive as it could be as the accommodation is a limiting factor. There are no specialist areas for subjects such as science, technology and food technology. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are placed with an alternative education provider obtain accreditation. For instance, those on the forestry project achieve units that lead towards a National Vocational Qualification in Land-Based Skills. A few acquire GCSEs in English and mathematics as unit staff go out to support their classroom-based learning. While older pupils in the bases follow some accredited courses, they do not have the opportunity to pursue subjects such as art and ICT when these could be made available. Some links with the community add greatly to the quality of the curriculum. For instance, many pupils have the opportunity to gain the Junior Fire Fighters' Award and occasionally a pupil attends a local school to pursue a particular subject. However, community-based learning is not exploited fully. For example, local facilities such as the swimming pool are not used and there are few educational visits. The lack of transport makes it difficult to organise visits but by not having such opportunities, pupils do not experience being in places such as museums, galleries, churches and other places of worship. This reduces the extent to which they acquire first-hand knowledge of their own culture. It also limits the degree to which they can begin to understand the beliefs and cultures of others.

Limited opportunity for involvement in the local community has two implications. Firstly, it reduces the extent to which pupils can make a contribution to the community. There are some opportunities, such as a joint drama project with young adults with learning difficulties in a local day centre, but more could be planned. Secondly, it limits the impact of the school's contribution to community cohesion, which is no more than satisfactory. Within the unit, leaders' excellent promotion of equal opportunities ensures that any obstacles that are preventing an individual from making progress are identified and dealt with. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to engage with the local and wider communities so that they become fully appreciative of other people's needs and backgrounds.

Overall, the unit is well led and managed. It has made a good response to the findings of the previous inspection report and it operates with a clear sense of purpose. It runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Even though the unit is on a split site, close monitoring ensures that both bases operate effectively. Staff maintain oversight of those pupils who are with an alternative provider and so the quality of their learning is evaluated. Close liaison with these providers also means that the unit tracks aspects of pupils' development, such as their attendance and punctuality. The management committee and local authority officers fulfil their roles effectively. They provide a good balance of support and challenge and work well with the headteacher in making sure that the outcomes of self-audit are used to make a difference. The unit's work is appreciated by local schools and it is an established component in the range of educational provision that is available in the district. It is well placed to continue this work as there is a good capacity for further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take measures to implement procedures that ensure the swift transfer of assessment data and other crucial information to the unit.
- Develop community-based learning so that pupils make better use of local facilities, extend their appreciation of their own culture and develop an understanding of that of other people.
- Extend the range of subjects and courses for which pupils can gain external accreditation.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chaselea PRU, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 1LH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and for taking the time to talk with us. We welcomed your contributions to the inspection. You told us that you think Chaselea is a good place to be in and we agree with you. We were very impressed with how polite and well mannered you are. You are making excellent progress towards growing into mature young people, such as knowing how to have a safe and healthy lifestyle. You behave extremely well and have an excellent attitude towards your school work. The staff take a great deal of care of you and help you a great deal to change your behaviour and improve the standard of your work.

It is clear that you all want to leave Chaselea and move back into school or on to college, and the staff give you a great deal of support in helping you to do this successfully. Lessons are good as teachers give you work at just the right level of difficulty and so you make good progress. You study a good range of subjects but the shortage of space stops you following courses in subjects like food technology. Those who run the unit do a good job and we have given them some ideas that will help to make Chaselea even better.

- Try to obtain information about your previous work much faster, so the staff know all about your needs as soon as possible.
- Give you more opportunities to use facilities in your local area and plan more visits so that you can learn about British culture and the traditions of others.
- Provide more examination subjects and courses in Years 10 and 11.

You can help Chaselea to go from strength to strength by attending as often as you can and continuing to behave very well and work hard. Those of you who do not go to school regularly should try harder. You do not know what you are missing!

Finally, I wish all of you the best of luck, especially if you will be returning to a mainstream school soon or will be leaving school this year.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell Lead inspector